

Dear Fellow Pennsylvanians:

Fuel to heat your home in winter is a necessity, not a luxury. And whether you heat with oil, gas, electricity, coal or wood, the bills can take a big chunk of your yearly household budget.



The Bureau of Consumer Protection and Antitrust Section within the Office of Attorney General offer steps you can take to reduce your utility bills. And while you're saving money, you'll also be conserving precious natural resources.

It is my hope that you will find these tips for cutting your heating costs, helpful.

Mike Fisher

Mike Fisher
Attorney General
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Shop for your fuel.

As you do with any major purchase, shop around for the best buy. Oil prices, for example, may vary as much as 10 to 15 cents per gallon among competitors in a local market.

Avoid tying arrangements.

Don't sign a furnace service agreement that requires you to buy

your fuel from the dealer that services the furnace. Such arrangements make it difficult for you to shop for the best fuel price.

Buy at the right time.

Heating oil and propane generally are less expensive in the summer months. That's when you should fill your tank. If space and environmental concerns permit, consider installing an extra fuel tank so you can buy more when the prices are lower.

Maintain your heating system.

Have a professional check it each year. Change filters regularly for peak performance.

Adjust your thermostat.

Set the thermostat at 65 degrees during the day and at 55 degrees while you sleep or when you're away from home several days.

Don't heat unused space.

Close off rooms and the heating supply to rooms that are not used often.

Use natural heating.

Open shades and curtains on the south side of your home to let in the

warmth of the sun. Close them at night or on cloudy days.

Insulate your water heater.

For additional energy saving, wrap the hot water pipes from the heater to the points of use.

Limit your shower time.

Taking a shower instead of a bath can save hot water, but only if you limit your time in the shower to five minutes or less.

Fix leaky hot water faucets.

If the faucet leaks 60 drops per minute, you waste 192 gallons of hot water each month.

Install storm doors and windows.

These will pay for themselves in just a few heating seasons by creating a dead air place which is an excellent insulation.

Keep the heat in.

Make sure you have adequate insulation throughout the house. Use low cost materials to seal cracks and holes where air can leak through walls and ceilings, at basement foundations, around windows and doors and at attic entry ways.

Getting Help With Your Heating Bills

If you're on a low or fixed income and are having difficulty paying your fuel bills, there are programs that can help.

The Pennsylvania Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program is an energy-assistance program administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. Both homeowners and renters may be eligible for this program, and it doesn't matter how you heat your residence. To apply for LIHEAP assistance, contact the county assistance office listed in the blue pages of your phone book.

The Pennsylvania Department of Commerce - Community and Economic Development Unit provides free weatherization services if your annual income meets the DCA guidelines. For more information about this program, call DCA, your utility company or the Community Action Agency listed in your phone book's white pages.

In addition, a number of utilities offer their own energy-assistance programs. Check with your utility company to find out what programs are offered and whether you qualify. Also, call your utility company for tips on saving energy.

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